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PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

(a) NEED FOR, MODALITIES FOR, COSTS INVOLVED AND FEASIBILITY OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATION UNITS

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its decision 3/COP(3) on Programme and Budget for the biennium 2000/2001, particularly paragraph 10 which deals with the functioning of the regional coordination units, the Conference of the Parties requests the Executive Secretary to report on the need for, the feasibility of and costs involved of the regional coordination units with a view to enabling the Conference of the Parties to take a decision on the issue.

2. The regional implementation annexes are a unique feature of UNCCD that have an impact on the proposed institutional set up to facilitate the implementation process. In accordance with article 11 of the Convention and the relevant provisions of the regional implementation annexes, in 1996 affected country Parties from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions started consultation on the elaboration of their regional action programmes to combat desertification. The establishment of the regional coordination units is meant to strengthen the capacity of the Parties of the respective regions in preparing and implementing their own programmes.

3. Several consultations have been held in the different regions with the aim of discussing and agreeing on priority activities, which will lay the basis of the regional action programmes. Those consultations took place as follows:

Asia and the Pacific	21-23 August 1996, New Delhi, India
	13-15 May 1997, Beijing, China
	10-13 November 1998, Bangkok, Thailand
Latin America and the Caribbean	24-26 January 1996, Buenos Aires, Argentina
	17-19 June 1996, Mexico City, Mexico
	10-12 March 1997, Havana, Cuba
	29 April-1 May 1998, St. John, Antigua and Barbuda
	9-12 August 1999, Lima, Peru
Africa	18-21 March 1997, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
	2-5 November 1998, Tunis, Tunisia
	30 September-1 October 1999, Nairobi, Kenya

4. The affected country Parties of the above-mentioned regions recognized the need to put in place an adequate regional back-up facility, which would help them to further develop and implement their regional action programmes and thereby to meet their obligations under the Convention. Consequently, institutional arrangements initiated by the region have been made to house the regional coordination units respectively at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean region in Mexico (August 1998), at the African Development Bank in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (December 1999) and at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand (September 2000).

5. The identification of the needs for the regional coordination units has emerged from a demand-driven approach reflecting the requests from affected country Parties listed in the regional implementation annexes. The range of expressed needs can be illustrated by the main activities of the regional coordination units as decided by the regional meetings referred to in paragraph 2, above.

II. NEED FOR REGIONAL COORDINATION UNITS

A. Activities

6. The main activities of the regional coordination units would be based on the provisions stipulated in the Convention and on subsequent decisions taken by concerned country Parties. They aim at promoting a strong regional ownership of activities in the following areas:

(a) Support for the development of the regional action programmes as well as follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of national, subregional and regional action programmes, while paying due attention to the necessary relationships between the various levels;

(b) Coordination of activities among relevant subregional and regional organizations in carrying out the priority activities in the context of the regional action programmes;

(c) Promotion of capacity-building for activities, which are better implemented at the regional level;

(d) Promotion of exchange of information and appropriate techniques, technical know-how and relevant experiences, while strengthening synergy between UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);

(e) Follow-up of decisions emanating from the Conference of the Parties, as well as the outcome of the regional meetings;

(f) Facilitation of consultative processes for the formulation of partnership arrangements, mobilization of cooperating partners and organizing regular consultations with them through their representatives in the region;

(g) Support for setting up new mechanisms, including desertification funds, to mobilize domestic and external financial resources for the implementation of the Convention;

(h) Advice on Convention monitoring, including the preparation of national reports and assisting in the elaboration of country desertification profiles;

(i) Coordination of thematic programme networks and of their contribution to interregional cooperation.

B. Expected results

7. The regional coordination units should supplement the efforts of the affected country Parties and other interested partners to meet the needs of the main actors and should coordinate the implementation of the regional action programme on a day-to-day basis.

8. It is expected that the regional coordination units will contribute to the following:

(a) Mobilization of political will at the regional level and greater awareness on the part of decision makers of countries and international cooperation institutions regarding the need to rationalize and coordinate their approaches to obtain the maximum benefit from UNCCD implementation;

(b) Review of existing programmes, projects and activities at the regional level with a view to harmonizing them in the light of the Convention and to seek convergence in the process of elaborating and implementing the regional action programmes;

(c) Strengthening of the capacities of country Parties to UNCCD and to regional and subregional organizations, in terms of formulating, managing and coordinating their policies, projects and programmes on combating desertification;

(d) Implementation and appropriate follow-up of UNCCD in the regions and strengthening the base for inter-institutional cooperation, notably with a view to achieving greater synergy in the implementation process of the three Rio Conventions: UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD.

III. MODALITIES

9. Following the establishment of the regional coordination units within UNEP, Mexico (for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region), the African Development Bank in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (for Africa) and within ESCAP (for Asia), those units have started their activities as described in chapter II, above.

10. At the request of the countries of the region concerned, the secretariat has facilitated the establishment of these three regional coordination units by negotiating and concluding with the host organizations and, as appropriate, with the host countries, a memorandum of understanding that governs the functioning of the regional units.

11. For the purposes of carrying out their mandates, each Regional Coordination Unit has been provided by the host institutions with office space, equipment and administrative backstopping, while the secretariat of the Convention has been requested by the country Parties concerned to support their efforts in strengthening the capacity of these units through the recruitment of the regional coordinator.

12. The secretariat has approached various bilateral and multilateral partners on the possibility of supporting the work undertaken by the units. So far, UNEP, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Organization of African Unity (OUA) and subregional organizations (Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA), Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sechéresse dans le Sahel (CILSS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)) have been able to confirm, on an interim basis, their readiness to contribute to the functioning of the units.

13. The secretariat has been mobilizing the necessary funds for the functioning of the regional coordination units on an interim basis through contributions to the supplementary fund at the request of the concerned Parties. Sustainability of the scheme can be strengthened by regular source of funding for the staff of the three regional coordinating units. Only then would the required institutional continuity enable a consequent planning of the activities of the regional units in the long term, thus improving their efficiency.

IV. COSTS INVOLVED

14. The provisional estimates of costs for the functioning of the regional coordination units in support of the regional action programmes is US$551,868 per year (see table below).

Table. Estimated costs of regional coordination units

(United States dollars)

Item	Africa		Asia		LAC		Grand total	
	Month	Year	Month	Year	Month	Year	Month	Year
Salary (Coordinator)	9,351	112,212	7,819	93,828	7,819	93,828	24,989	299,868
Clerical cost	2,000	24,000	2,000	24,000	2,000	24,000	6,000	72,000
Travel	3,000	36,000	3,000	36,000	3,000	36,000	9,000	108,000
Communications	1,000	12,000	1,000	12,000	1,000	12,000	3,000	36,000
Supplies	1,000	12,000	1,000	12,000	1,000	12,000	3,000	36,000
Grand total	16,351	196,212	14,819	177,828	14,819	177,828	45,989	551,868

V. FEASIBILITY

15. The institutional feasibility of the regional coordination units has been demonstrated through their hosting arrangements and the willingness of affected country Parties to contribute to their running costs. The Parties may wish to consider in the light of this report whether budgetary resources can be provided under the core budget for 2001 in order to cover the salary costs of a coordinator and a secretary per regional coordination unit. The total amount required for staff costs for one year is US$371,868.

16. The operational and other costs of the units including, *inter alia*, communication, travel and supplies, would continue to be funded through voluntary contributions under the Supplementary Fund.

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